

A Theory of Relevance for Questions

Relevance in the sense of *conversational coherence* is the most fundamental notion for research on dialogue. It is the cornerstone of theories of dialogue in the same way that *grammaticality* is to syntax. In this paper I restrict attention to relevance relating a query to a possible (felicitous) response. Still, even restricted to this domain, attempts at a comprehensive characterization of relevance, difficult as they undoubtedly are, are few and far between. Indeed, most existing accounts are intrinsically restricted in their ability to scale up.

I offer a number of arguments for the need for a notion of relevance internalized in some way within the theory of meaning: relevance seems to underpin certain types of clarification questions and *lack of conversational relevance* seems to underpin the inference that one does not wish to address a prior utterance, as pointed out in Grice's classical paper (Grice, 1975). I sketch an account of relevance within the dialogue theory KoS (Ginzburg, 2009, forthcoming), underpinned by Type Theory with Records (Cooper, 2005) and offer preliminary results of a corpus study in this domain.